

**“TO WHAT DEGREE THE PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN MOUNTED BY
“YELQ” PARTY EXPLAINS THEIR ELECTORAL SUCCESS?”**

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INTRODUCTION

The role of Public Relations in Politics has been visible from times dating back to old Greece when it became the staple in political life. We learn how from Roman times the conquerors used rhetoric and how in France the revolutionists used their weapon influencing the public to overthrow the monarchy. The modern methods of political parties and campaigns has developed into a profession, where PR experts get hired to design and implement PR campaign and manage their reputation.

Examining the role of PR in Armenia, is interesting and important as skilled PR in Armenian political parties has a very short history. Studies conducted in countries such as South Korea and Egypt, have shown various PR strategies that are effective in their countries. Drawing a parallel to a country like Armenia, based on the level of corruption and numbers of exodus, it is critical to examine to what extend those international PR tactics are applicable to Armenia and which local strategies have conducted during the last elections of 2017.

The current research focuses on the PR strategies used by “Yelq” or “Way Out” coalition. The attention does not delve into the fundamentals of the coalition’s formation. It is primarily focused on the strategies Yelq has implemented which have succeeded to conduct enough voted to pass the parliamentary elections and are a success story today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The independence of Armenia is often confused with the antiquity of the nation. Many forget that Armenia, as an independent republic, is only 25 years old, which means the constitution, leading forces and laws are very recent and run the risk to malfunction. However, the world is developing and so does Armenia. The development of the country is based on the leader that the people choose. Hence, to help the people make the right choice, while keeping a

healthy public sphere, an accurate political PR is needed. To help the people to have a better vision of different political parties by keeping conservative means, such as newspapers and photographic images is a must, while it is high time to implement modern methods like social media such as Facebook and Twitter. However, before anything, the Armenian people need faith and belief in change.

Before implementing modern or conservative means into promoting any political party, firstly one major problem needs to be solved: people's faith in socially and economically better Armenia. The fall of the Soviet Union and the poor political status has led to massive disappointments in the population. As a result, only 2 millions of Armenians are left and up to 60 000 people leave the country on the yearly bases. This is a vivid example of a low social status. Thus, while promoting any political party, first of all PR has to serve as a trust which will inject faith in the people and prevent them from leaving the country. After gaining trust, further steps of PR methods can be undertaken. Firstly, through surveys one can conclude how active Armenians are in using digital tools to research politics. Meanwhile, we should remember the fact that not everyone has access to the regularly published, political information. From those results one can decide the most effective way for PR to make a political campaign influential.

Political participation is a major problem in Armenia. People of the country have stopped believing in fair elections, thus their participation is not seen resultant. This does not mean they do not vote. Their vote is enormously effected by directionality of social network sites, SNS. As social pressure is very high, people's opinion is easily manipulated. This makes it important to understand the South Korean case and implement a similar research in Armenia. Young Min Baek's study is based on a survey from the 2012 South Korean election, examining interplay between three factors influencing electoral participation: (1) type of SNS use (i.e., political versus nonpolitical use), (2) user characteristics (i.e., past voters versus

nonvoters), and (3) directionality of SNS messages (i.e., messages received from versus those sent to SNS friends). The results show that SNS has changed the passive voters into active voters. This can be adaptable to Armenia's elections only when people start using their votes based on individual opinions instead one an opinion formed under a peer pressure.

South Korea is not the only type of a country that needs to be observed. A developing country such as Egypt for instance has more parallels with Armenia than Western countries such as the United States. Both Egypt and Armenia are developing countries, where a larger portion of the demographic does not have access to the same kind of media as people from, for example, the United States. Khaled Gad in his research argues about how to determine if Egyptians' social networking sites users are interested in political promoting campaigns and how they deal with such campaigns. As a conclusion to create the correct impact, a political party should feature itself on at least one of the social networking sites, such as YouTube, Tumblr, Twitter, Flickr, etc. These are also the fastest growing and biggest which can then influence as many people as possible. This tactic is surely possible in Armenia. It will not only help people to form a more radical opinion but also will encourage the population, more concretely the younger generation, to use social medias such a Twitter and YouTube.

Among social medias, Facebook has a huge impact on people's lives. Promoting a campaign on Facebook, will give the party the opportunity to be discussed, shared and commented. It will give people the occasion to delve deeper into the workings of Facebook in comparison with other social media sites. David Painter's research proves these points. He argues that Facebook is more effective at fostering a bond between the public and the campaign than campaign websites. Users engaging in expressive behaviors triggering higher levels of elaboration and self-awareness are most influenced by this bond. As Painter's paper argues these sites, such as Facebook, are also a good tool for promoting socially responsible behavior. In comparison with other more traditional media, social media offers a two-way

communication which is very different from the former one-way type of media.

Meanwhile, Jessica Vitak argues the opposite and support the perspective of Facebook being superficial, including the active participants in political debate on social media. The term “slacktivism” is often applied to such cases. This form of, as they say, feel-good politics leads to little or no impact of change. The people that did participate and engage in change, did so in a way that was not time-consuming and least intrusive. Much information is amassed yet little to no action is taken. Yet because more people can amass information means that more people than before will be prone to take action. Regardless the news feed function makes a debate going and catches attention. Combining those feeds with posters and photographic images as mentioned before, it can change the superficial comments into merged votes.

In examining the relationship between the audience and a political organization, Kaye Sweetser et al. have focused on how another social media could be effective: Twitter. Twitter is less used in Armenia, however the examination of Sweetser et al. on the relationship between the audience and a political organization through Twitter can be another means of PR influence on a political party’s popularity. Moreover, they have investigated the possibility of the use of Twitter actually manifesting itself into political support and not “slacktivism” as is sometimes used in this context. Their results have shown that engagement in a political organization has increased a notion of conversation between the user of Twitter and the particular organization. This research contrasts with the paper by Painter. However, this will be interesting to highlight the weaknesses and strengths of another type of social media, which is also widely used by many people around the world.

While focusing on modern means and social media, it is highly important to remember that the only current city that is digitalized and modern, is Yerevan. The strategy of the

campaigns in Armenian villages go back to the modern American tactics from 1940's where the radio and the TV are still the main means of communication. As a result, in the urban areas the most effective way of communication will be through newspapers, radio and pamphlets. Also as the budget is important, it is important to have a principle that the money has to be spent where it will be most effective. The newspaper is one of the oldest ways of communication and it is still considered one of the major channels by party publicity directors. Other media sources are billboards, leaflets and pamphlets, but also radio. Radio has an important effect on campaign technique. Charles Smith's results that the audience is one; the ones who are interested in politics and the interests are aroused. (Smith, 1948)

Another conservative yet more modern means of PR is photographic images. Photographic images can positively influence the political party's organization. These results can be used both for online media and print which can also highlight interesting differences between PR online and offline. For a country like Armenia a smaller percentage of the population will have access or be active on social media sites. Thus, this tactic can be applied in the case of Armenia. As Nagib Padil suggests, through analyzing the subject matter, form and medium of a select amount of photographic images is the way to bond with the people. For example, the form, the positioning, color and size of a certain image all plays a role in the absorption of information. As with the other two discussed characters of images, the contrast is made between online and print images. The visual images convey more and faster information than a piece of text, highlighting the importance of effective imagery in political campaigns.

To conclude, political parties have to focus on three aspects: regaining trust, encouraging modern means yet not forgetting the conservative means to promote their party. Thus, I believe that to emphasize the importance of staying together and returning back to Armenia, can gain the trust for a better future for all Armenian people. Also, the modern means will attract the young generations who are active users of social sites. The young generation will be the source

of the promotion through social sites such as Facebook and Twitter, which will make a political party more known and boost its appearance through debates and news feeds. Meanwhile in the rural areas, the conservative means, such as newspapers and posters, will promote the party to the audience outside of the capital city and the older generation. Hence, I hope my research will be able to help me find the needed and missing PR tactics which will combine those three aspects and will influence the popularity in a political campaign and make it successful.

Research Question

My research question “To what degree the Public Relations campaign mounted by Yelq (Way Out) party explains their electoral success?” is a result of my concern in lack of professionalism and cooperation in Armenia. As previous attempts of cooperation between opposition parties have shown, unity does not seem to work. Throughout the last ten years, the several attempts, such as during the 2008 Armenian presidential election, protests have failed and have led to bloody and violent response from the police and the government. Thus few questions need to be answered:

- How might social media effectively be used in an Armenian political PR campaign?
- To what extent should an Armenian political PR campaign rely on traditional forms of promotion like radio and newspaper advertisements?
- What is the most effective PR strategy for a new opposition political party?
- How can political PR be used to restore the public's faith in fair elections and motivate them to vote?

Through finding the answers, I will devise a PR strategy to win back the trust of the people and make them believe in unity through a healthy sphere of communication among the political parties and the people.

I. Methodology

The answers to the above-mentioned questions will be the leading source to understand what is missing in Armenian opposition parties to be more successful and share a more accessible information with the population. Armenian opposition political parties believe that the last four presidential elections have been a fraud. The parties mostly share the same views with slightly different perspectives, therefore, it is interesting to observe a recently launched political party called “Yelq”. It is aimed at uniting the opposition parties and oppose the Republican Party of Armenia. The first important steps that need to be undertaken are, becoming familiar with the party “Yelq”, learning from the mistakes of more experienced opposition parties and finally involve the citizens in the campaign’s progress through combining conservative and modern methods.

Firstly, I need to become familiar with the Yelq party: their pillars, upcoming plans and decisions. To understand their upcoming decisions, it is important to get familiar with their PR department and PR methods. Firstly, interviews with Yelq board members, PR group members and more, will help me to visualize where they stand and what they plan next. Consequently, implementing my PR ideas can complete their strategy in order to unite the opposition parties. By answering the interview questions (see Appendix I), it will help me to come up with additional tactics, which can increase the effectiveness of the campaign.

Based on the conclusion from the interview the adjustments of my initially planned PR plan will be made. However, few basic strategies should not be forgotten in any case:

- **Newspapers:** As Armenia has little to no access to the digital world in rural areas, the old fashioned way will always work. The newspaper is one of the oldest ways of communication and it is still considered one of the major channels by party publicity directors.

- **Radio:** Radio is another conservative means that will be used both in Yerevan and outside of Yerevan and will be mostly aimed for older generations.
- **Campaign:** Ads in newspapers and posters throughout Yerevan can be an initiative of a campaign called “Your Voice Matters” where citizens will be encouraged to vote and be part of the change they want to see.
- **Videos and Live Streams:** Many people are distrustful due to lack of information and communication. A solution to this can be a continuous activeness on the YouTube channel of Consolidation and its Facebook site by posting videos and live streams of behind the scenes; how the team works towards its campaign, what the atmosphere between the employees is etc.
- **Facebook:** Among various social sites, in Armenia, Facebook is the most effective. It is also the most effective means of publicizing a political campaign. Because of the news feed and interactive nature of Facebook, it is an excellent means of getting to know peoples’ opinion and reaction on various political parties.
- **Print Advertisements:** Print advertisements, more specifically photos and short stories of various citizens can catch the attention of many. By making a powerful ad, people will remember the story which will unconsciously relate to the Consolidation party.

Secondly, it is important to interview the political parties Consolidation is planning to cooperate with. Their opinion is very important. It will create a neutral view on the situation and hearing out the concerns the parties have, creating an internal healthy sphere, while preventing any future misunderstanding. As other opposition parties such as, Prosperous Armenia, exist much longer, they have more experience and failures which are worth observing and learning from. Hence, the following questions can be asked:

- Which PR tactics have you used before?
- Which have been successful and which not?

Finally, once the PR methods start to be implemented, it is essential to follow up how much people’s awareness about the party and their opinion about the initiative. Through this kind of interrogation, it can be an ideal way to inform older generations. Also radio and memorable brochures delivered to the homes of the people is a conservative yet an effective methods of Armenian adults. Meanwhile, the younger generations will be more attracted electronically. By posting videos and photos of “behind the scenes” in the party will gain people’s trust. By way of the transparency, people will gain trust in the party and continue to watch and wait follow ups of the party’s campaign. This is where the conservative methods meet the modern, which is exactly how unity can be reached.

II. Timeline

Sine I have to start my internship in the Consolidation party starting from January, I cannot share my final schedule yet, however this can be an approximate planning of the coming weeks starting from January 2017.

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
JANUARY	Observation of Consolidation’s Department Notes	Analyzing the observations + Having interviews with the partners of Consolidation	Making a conclusion of the PR Campaign + Continue the interviews	Making a decision + Writing a conclusion on all parties
FEBRUARY	Implementing the dos and donts into my PR campaign	Having a final document of the most efficient PR Campaign	Implementation of the strategies	Implementation of the strategies
MARCH	Implementation of the strategies	Implementation of the strategies	Implementation of the strategies	Implementation of the strategies

APRIL	Elections (occupied)	Elections (occupied)	Elections + having a draft ready	Elections (occupied)
MAY	Writing a final draft on the results and lessons learned	Writing a final draft on the results and lessons learned	Writing a final draft on the results and lessons learned	Writing a final draft on the results and lessons learned

III. Annotated Bibliography

Howard, P. N. (2005). Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 597(1), 153-170. Retrieved November 3, 2016, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25046067>

This journal article is concentrated on the impacts of digital media in political campaign strategy while keeping the impact in a healthy public sphere. It is observed how to keep the healthy public spheres through shared text and acts of conversation. Based on surveys it is concluded that Americans are very active in using digital tools to research politics. Meanwhile they discuss the issues with their family and friends. On the other hand, ethnographic observations show that through the campaign strategies public sphere is increasingly geared toward fragmenting. The article is aware of the fact that not everyone has access to the regularly published, political information.

I think this journal article's research is very adaptable to the Armenian current situation. Armenians being people of emotions, it is important to understand what effect the political campaigns leave on people and whether those effects are within the norms of a healthy public sphere. The research is also applicable due to the fact that only the minority has access to an objective constantly updating political information.

Smith, W., C., Jr. (1948). Campaign Communications Media. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 259(1), 90-97. Retrieved November 3, 2016, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1026313>

The research of C. W. Smith shows that some voters are influenced by one kind of appeal and some are almost resistant to any of the ordinary appeals. The budget is important. Yet, due to

the limited budget, it is important to have a principle that the money has to be spent where it will be most effective. The newspaper is one of the oldest ways of communication and it is still considered one of the major channels by party publicity directors. Other media sources are billboards, leaflets and pamphlets, but also radio. Radio has an important effect on campaign technique. Smith results that the audience is one; the ones who are interested in politics and the interests are aroused.

Although this article is from 1948, it is essential to understand that the urban areas of Armenia are technologically undeveloped. The strategy of the campaigns in Armenian villages go back to the modern American tactics from 1940's. There it is still through newspapers, radio and pamphlets that the goal will be reached and the people's attention will be caught.

Baek, Y. M. (n.d.). Political mobilization through social network sites: The mobilizing power of political messages received from SNS friends. *Computers in Human Behavior*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.11.021>

The journal article's examination is about whether social network sites (SNSs) contribute to political participation. Based on SNSs' The results have been mixed. The study is based on a survey from the 2012 South Korean election, examining interplay between three factors influencing electoral participation: (1) type of SNS use (i.e., political versus nonpolitical use), (2) user characteristics (i.e., past voters versus nonvoters), and (3) directionality of SNS messages (i.e., messages received from versus those sent to SNS friends). The results show that SNS has changed the passive voters into active voters.

Political Participation is a major problem in Armenia. People of the country have stopped believing in fair elections, thus their participation is not seen resultant. This does not mean they do not vote. Their vote is enormously effected by directionality of SNS. As social

pressure is very high, people's opinion is easily manipulated. This makes it important to understand South Korean case and implement a similar research in Armenia.

Gad, K. A. (2015). The Impact of Political Advertising through Social Networking Sites on Egyptians' Political Orientations and Choices. *International Journal of Information, Business and Management*, 7(1), 1-18.

This paper argues about how to determine if Egyptians' social networking sites users are interested in political promoting campaigns and how they deal with such campaigns. As a conclusion to create the correct impact, a political party should feature itself on at least one of the social networking sites, such as YouTube, Tumblr, Twitter, Flickr, etc. These are also the fastest growing and biggest which can then influence as many people as possible.

I chose this paper because Egypt has more parallels with Armenia than Western countries such as the United States. Both Egypt and Armenia are developing countries, where a larger portion of the demographic does not have access to the same kind of media as people from for example the United States.

Painter, D. L. (2015). Online political public relations and trust: Source and interactivity effects in the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign. *Public Relations Review*, 41(5), 801-808. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.06.012

In this article, the results indicate that Facebook is more effective at fostering a bond between the public and the campaign than campaign websites. Users engaging in expressive behaviors triggering higher levels of elaboration and self-awareness are most influenced by this bond. As the paper argues these sites such as Facebook are also a good tool for promoting socially

responsible behavior. In comparison with other more traditional media, social media offers a two-way communication which is very different from the former one-way type of media.

This paper will highlight the importance of Facebook in the use of political campaigns. It will give me the opportunity to delve deeper into the workings of Facebook in comparison with other social media sites. The strengths and weaknesses of the Facebook will be assessed by this paper and therefore also used in my project.

Sweetser, K. D., English, K., & Fernandes, J. (2015). Super PACs and Strong Relationships: The Impact of Digital Interaction on the Political Organization–Public Relationship. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 27(2), 101-117. doi:10.1080/1062726x.2014.976824

In examining the relationship between the audience and a political organization, Sweetser et al. have focused on how Twitter could effect this. Moreover, they have investigated the possibility of the use of Twitter actually manifesting itself into political support and not “slacktivism” as is sometimes used in this context. Their results have shown that engagement in a political organization has increased a notion of conversation between the user of Twitter and the particular organization.

In contrast with the paper by David Lynn Painter, this article will focus on the use of Twitter as a means to analyze the impact of social media on a political organization. This will be interesting to highlight the weaknesses and strengths of another type of social media, which is also widely used by many people around the world.

Padil, M. N., & Azahari, M. H. (2014). The Impact of Photographic Images in Print and Online Media for Political Campaign in Malaysia. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity IJSSH*, 4(3), 214-219. doi:10.7763/ijssh.2014.v4.349

This paper goes about analyzing the subject matter, form and medium of a select amount of photographic images. For example, regarding the form, the positioning, color and size of a certain image all play a role in the absorption of information. As with the other two discussed characters of images, the contrast is made between online and print images. Here the study also shown that visual images convey more and faster information than a piece of text, highlighting the importance of effective imagery in political campaigns.

The following study will be advantageous to understand the relationship the audience of a certain political organization has with photographic images and how they can positively influence the organization. These results can be used both for online media and print which can also highlight interesting differences between PR online and not online. For a country like Armenia, this should be of interest. As seen with the paper on Egypt; a smaller percentage of the population will have access or be active on social media sites.

Vitak, J., Zube, P., Smock, A., Carr, C. T., Ellison, N., & Lampe, C. (2011). It's Complicated: Facebook Users' Political Participation in the 2008 Election. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 14(3), 107-114. doi:10.1089/cyber.2009.0226

Vitak et al. have found that although users will actively participate in political debate on social media, it is rather superficial. The term "slacktivism" is often applied to such cases. This form of, as they say, feel-good politics leads to little or no impact of change. The people that did participate and engaged in change, did so in a way that was not time-consuming and least intrusive. Much information is amassed yet little to no action is taken. Yet because more people can amass information means that more people than before will be prone to take action.

Again Facebook is the subject matter of this public relations' study. However, this paper is more in depth, and as I think that Facebook, of all social media sites, is the most effective means of publicizing a political campaign, I find it important to do multiple analyses on this further. Because of the News Feed and interactive nature of Facebook, it is an excellent means of getting to know peoples' opinion and reaction on that.

Appendix I — Interview Questions to Yelq board and PR group members

1. What was the philosophy behind naming the party Yelq?
2. What was your PR Budget?
3. What was the number of your team members?
4. How many were tasked to specifically deal with the PR coalition?
5. How many volunteers did your PR campaign have? And who did you consider a volunteer? Where were they distributed? Age? Gender?
6. Which PR tactics had you planned to implement to create a healthy communication with the citizens of the RA?
7. How useful was the use of Social Network such as Facebook?
8. What public gatherings did you have?
9. Did you consider gender in developing your PR strategy?
10. What were the strategies to attract votes from 18-35, 35-55 and 55-above aged voters?
11. Did you differentiate between campaigns in the regions and Yerevan?
12. How did you prioritize where to campaign more and where not as much?
13. In your earlier campaign stage there was a decision to split Yelq team and campaign in small and mobile teams? Why? Did it pay off?
14. How do you explain the huge gap between Yerevan and regions votes?
15. Did you meet the prior set goals?
16. What was innovative in your campaign?
17. How do you plan to institutionalize your party?
18. How did you do fundraising?

Appendix II — Interview Answers of Yelq board and PR group members

1. **Tigran Avenian: board member of Civil Contract Party, the PR member of Yelq Coalition, what else can I say about myself? What else do you need?**

- **What was the philosophy behind naming the party Yelq?**

Well, this was a long conversation. As we were trying to grasp what name we should have to, in terms of the PR, because we had like a lack of time and we needed this name to be known for, in a month's time. So this should have been something very short, something very straight forward and something that relates to the situation that we are in, that Armenia is in. Yelq, which means exit or way out, represents that we are offering a way out of the situation that Armenia and its people are in now. So we are offering the way out of this deep hole of the desperation. We are also offering the way out out of poverty and immigration out of Armenia. So this was the general idea behind the name.

- **What was your PR Budget?**

Yelq has spent about 86.000 dollars for the whole campaign and its not only the PR, it is practically everything that we had. So, basically, our main costs were related to the printing, because we had around 120 candidates and we had to print flyers for all of them. As far as I remember we have spent just about less than 8000 dollars on TV advertisement. I believe we have spent around 400 dollars for Facebook advertising, but are general budget was about 86.000 dollars, which included everything, every cost that we had.

- **And in comparing to the other parties, it was pretty minimal right?**

Officially, let's say, the republican party of Armenia has shown around 800.000 dollars. But non-officially, let's say, they have spent a lot of money on so-called entrakasharq, I don't know if the term exists in English. It is also the election bribe. And this was throughout the whole country. Basically I believe their budget should be around 20 to 30 million dollars.

But I can add also that there were parties that have spent even more on TV advertising, than our whole budget, but they did not even get into the parliament. It was I believe, Armenia Renaissance, they had spent around 60 million drams on TV advertising. And I believe it was Oro(?), that has spent something about 26-30 million drams. But they both didn't get into the parliament.

- **What was the number of your team members?**

I believe the decision makers; the group consisted of about 8 people, maybe less.

- **Could you name those people?**

It was Aram Sarkissian, Haik Konjurian, Me, Ani Samsonian, Niko was also involved sometimes in this PR group, **Araik Harutunyan** also sometimes working. Well the core team was me, Aram Sarkissian and Hayk Konjurian.

- **Ok, and the division into groups and through the regions, that was all your tactic?**

Yes.

- **How many were tasked to specifically deal with the PR coalition?**

Basically the PR team with all its suggestions came up to be, let us say, the general council of Yelq, which was the final decision maker. So the PR team gave suggestions to this council and the council whether to do or not to do, this or that step. So the general council members, were the board members of the three parties that are included in Yelq, that was not all the time the same people. From time to time this person was there or was absent, but basically, the people from all the boards of civil contract.

- **How many volunteers did your PR campaign have? And who did you consider a volunteer? Where were they distributed? Age? Gender?**

Well basically, everyone, I am not talking about the candidates, during this campaign was a volunteer. We have not paid anyone for doing this or that job. Basically, these were our supporters, party members, not only our but also Luysavor and Hanrapetutyun. And we haven't paid anyone anything for their work, so they were all volunteers. I believe this was about 200 people or maybe even less, about 150 people actively involved in the campaign. Except the candidates.

I can say that most of them were younger people. Most of the party members are young people, so the average age is probably 33 years. But during the campaign we had, I think from 18 to 35 years old. So generally, these people were even younger, so their average was 25-24. They were students, graduates, people who owned firms, big CEO's. And everyone was doing the same.

- **What was their task like?**

I am talking about the group of people that was without during the campaign, who we worked with throughout whole Armenia. These were people who were talking to the potential voters. We had Niko in the between who was talking with the megaphone. And we had all these young people with the flyers who were approaching potential voters and talking to them, giving the flyers, explaining who we are, what we want to do and why they should go and vote for us. Most of our campaign was these one-to-one conversations.

- **Which PR tactics had you planned to implement to create a healthy communication with the citizens of the RA?**

Well these were the general tactics, the tête à tête tactics. One was that we were going to the neighborhoods and we were talking with megaphone and a lot of people were just looking out from their windows and listening to what we were saying. And we had this one and a half minute, two-minute message, shortly talking the situation in Armenia and what solution we suggest to that. So this was a short and quite effective talk that was generally given by Niko. The second tactics were the tête à tête conversations we had with people. So the first is the one where you give a flyer and say "that is the way out" and if the person has questions you need to answer them. You also have to remember that you have to do that throughout Armenia and don't have enough time to talk about all the problems. We tried to speak with the people for one to two minutes for the people who wanted to talk.

- **How useful was the use of Social Network such as Facebook?**

It is useful for Yerevan, for sure. Yerevan is quite connected with the cloud, with the general internet and the people are using the internet, Facebook and they are getting their news and information from online sources. This was effective for Yerevan and some bigger cities like, Vanadzor, Gyumri. But still the TV is a major source of information in Armenia and for the majority TV is still the main source of information. Of course we had some time on TV, one minute during the day for the campaign period, it was for the first republican channel H1. So they were giving every party, every coalition, one minute of time for free. And you also had two minutes of time if you needed them but that was for 150 dollars per minute. If you like to have it, you could pay and have two more minutes during the day. We haven't used that, as we had quite a low budget. But this is interesting, because several parties that were paying quite some money on that, did not really succeed. Not only is PR important, but the content; who you are and what you suggest.

- **What public gatherings did you have?**

We had several meetings, for example, in Hrazdan, the 8th of March in Yerevan, in Vanadzor and in Ararat, which was our last meeting. The main idea of not having these meetings was because we were sure people who are coming to these meetings are going to vote for us, because they believe us. But we needed for new people, for those who have yet to hear about us to hear us. So we went straight to their homes, their neighborhoods. This is why we choose this campaign tactic.

- **Did you consider gender in developing your PR strategy?**

No. We had something else. Yelq is associated with younger people, if you have noticed. We offered new, fresh innovated people. Who were young but also quite professional in his or her own field. So these were our candidates. So it was not gender specific, it was something very general. We had both men and women of younger ages who are professionals and successful in their fields.

- **What was innovative in your campaign?**

I think in Armenia no one has seen this kind of campaign, because generally the politicians, before they haven't gone through all the methods of going to the neighborhoods. This was not common in Armenia. It was probably the first time this was being done. And that it was being done by the candidates themselves. This has its effect. Because the people start to see that we are like them. They work here, they work in our neighborhood?

- **Wasn't Raffi Hovhannisian going from home to home?**

Not really. No. He also was very easy-going and, this was called the Barev-revolution, and he was greeting everyone but generally the tactic that had was quite different from ours. He has doing meetings in the cities and the villages but didn't go from neighborhood to neighborhood and knock on doors. But his campaign was also not that bad. He had quite interesting results during the presidential campaign.

- **What were the strategies to attract votes from 18-35, 35-55 and 55-above aged voters?**

For the older generation, the main tactic was TV. Because these people generally watch TV and the news. For the younger generations, social media worked. I believe that most of our voters were younger people from 18 -35 years old. These were the people that wanted change and were not interested in the electoral bribe and these are the people that are using social media and the internet. And the people more or less understand what the election is and why they go to the elections and probably know a bit more details of how the parliament works for how many years they vote for the parliament. For the middle age, this is mixed. Our general target is the younger age. I would actually rather differentiate, not on age but knowledge, we could say critical thinking. We were targeting the people with this critical thinking, who could analyze the situation. Because there were people, who you could not talk about any program or development during the next five years, because these were just waiting for the bribe. Because they have been taught for seventeen years that if there is an election, someone needs to pay money, someone needs to pay you money. That's what they are used to. Working with these people is very difficult, because this bad culture has been installed in them for almost two decades. So we were trying to target the people who were understanding the situation or has that critical thinking.

- **Did you differentiate between campaigns in the regions and Yerevan?**

Not really.

- **Did you have radio?**

Yes, we had radio as well. We have used local TV channels, Lori, Gyumri, I believe in Syunik. I would say the difference of the regions would be that generally we would give speeches who were from that regions, who were familiar with those people. Niko was pretty active in Yerevan and everywhere. But Edmun was very focused on Lori, Aram was focused on Syunik. These people know the region, the mentality and way of thinking of those people. Susian(?) from Kotayk and had quite some results there. He had around 6.800 votes. So the people who were talking to the people, worked in those regions. But the general message was the same, that there is a way out.

- **How did you prioritize where to campaign more and where not as much?**

We prioritized the regions we assumed we had votes, Yerevan, Lori and Ararat. And Kotayk because Susian Mikaelian (?). Yerevan, because there are a lot of people here that don't expect bribes, who have that understanding, who understand what it means to be a citizen, what the election means. The people with the critical thinking is most saturated in Yerevan. Lori because we had good results during the Vanadzor elections, we had around 11.000 votes in Vanadzor, half a year ago. We prioritized Kotayk, because of Susian (?). And Ararat because we had good results in the previous campaign in 2011. So we prioritized the parts that we were more or less strong in.

- **How did you manage the regions where people didn't know you well or success.**

Well when I said prioritized, I mean that there were people that were constantly working in those prioritized regions. But then we had 13 days of going to each region. From 13 days we

spent 4 in Yerevan and we spent 9 days in the regions. We were in all the regions, Syunik, Kotayk, Aragatsotn, Armavir... Basically we covered every region. In the regions that were not prioritized, the work was not constant, the candidates were weaker and didn't give the right results. We felt that during the campaign. Just like international finance, you need to sell what you can do the best, for what you can provide the best service, the best product. You need to sell that product as much as you can.

- **In your earlier campaign stage there was a decision to split Yelq team and campaign in small and mobile teams? Why? Did it pay off?**

Yes, it did. And as I mentioned what created that base, this is what gave us the idea what to expect from each region. We had the feedback from the people, we understood where we were stronger and where weaker. Where we were strong, we tried to be even stronger.

Jemma: How do you explain the huge gap between Yerevan and region votes?

That is because of the culture I was talking about. In the regions, especially in the villages, where everyone knows each other and/or related to each other. Everyone needs to take the bribe because that is how they have done it for 20 years. But in Yerevan there are a lot of people who are independent, who are in various fields that are not related to the government and they can do however they wish to do.

- **Did you meet the prior set goals?**

I am not sure we achieved the maximum, we could have done better for sure. But we have shown pretty good results. If I look throughout the whole campaign and if I compare it to other parties and their budgets and strategies, with our resources this was one of the best ways we could have done the campaign. And this was one of the most effective ways. As I have said we spend about 86.000 dollars and we have 9 MP's. I don't know if there is a party that has spent less than us. We did better than the Dashnaks, we did far better than parties like Oro, Hak, Renaissance.

- **How did you do fundraising?**

Generally, it was crowd funding and the candidates themselves. The new systems are giving incentives to the candidates to fight for their place in the parliament. You can be the 100th on the list and still go to parliament if you have the right amount of votes. So this system creates strong incentives for the candidates to do fundraising.

- **Do you salute that?**

Yes, of course. The competition needs to be there because it drives them to do more and in every competitive sphere, this is what brings out the best product.

- **Do you do consider that it was based on fair ground?**

No, it is a fair ground within the party. Because your candidates are competing against each other. For example, you can be the 100th number but if you have 10.000 votes for yourself, you can go to the parliament. This creates competition within the coalition and this gave quite interesting results.

- **So do you think the votes were based on the resources or on...?**

Without the resources we wouldn't have any kind of result. PR has strongly correlated to our results. So the competition that the candidates had created those incentives and not sit and wait what Niko would do. But also to go and fight for their place. To bring on some finances, because they were working for themselves.

- **How do you plan to institutionalize your party?**

Civil contract has inner democracy. Civil contract's board is being elected by the member of the party and with the new two parties that we are in coalition with, we have agreed that after that the Yerevan Mayor elections we will start negotiations to start unifying in one party. This is our first step that we need to make in the institutionalizing. But generally the principles that will be within this party, will be coming from the Civil contract party. Because this inner democracy is probably the best way of governing a party. And it is important to implement it in the new party that we are in process of making.

- **Now that Mr. Pashinyan is running for Mayor, how would you connect this with the PR? Was his PR a success to go for more?**

He wouldn't have done this if we would have failed the parliamentary elections. But this is the continuation of the success, we have gained this amount trust, now we ask for more. Because we can do more.

2. Arayik Harutyunyan: member of the contract party, candidate, 4000 votes

- What was the philosophy behind naming the party Yelq?

To tell the truth, we discussed many different names for it. During discussions, we concluded that what we were going to offer was a way out (Yelq) of the existing situation. So we named it Yelq. A way out, because the existing situation in Armenia is very tough, there is a big wave of despair, and we must show a way out of it. Later it turned out that it's not a bad name because it was relevant both by meaning and form, it had clarity to it and was short. Besides, later we had the slogan "there is a way out" and so "Yelq" it was, which, I believe, was a good PR step and benefited us.

- What was your PR Budget?

In general our budget was made up of candidates' budgets, because today election code does not set out all expenses. For instance, expenses related to office activity, fuel, food are not set out in the budget. I can say that this amount must add up to around hundred thousand. The most marginal candidate of Republican party spent much more than we spent on our whole campaign. Samvel Aleksanyan gained 43000 votes in our area: this means approximately 600-700 hundred million drams. Whereas we spent only 50 million on all this. Our expenses mostly include transportation, printing. We mostly focus on talking to people. You don't need much money for that. I went to about 2500 homes during door-to-door program. And I saw serious concern among Republicans, because they had been trying for months to attract voters, even offered them bribes, and here I was, knocking on people's doors, smiling and making them vote for us.

- What was the number of your team members?

It's hard to say. In Yerevan there were around 100-120 people and in marzes 15-20 people per marz. This adds up to about 200 active members.

- How many were tasked to specifically deal with the PR coalition?

1, 2, 4 people were tasked with PR issues.

- How many volunteers did your PR campaign have? And who did you consider a volunteer? Where were they distributed? Age? Gender?

Half of 200 were volunteers. These included people not from political forces and who came to assist us. They were our like-minded people and supporters. But not party people. If you represent a party, it's your work and not volunteering. Mainly they are students, young people, young specialists who have just graduated. Most of them are under 30. It's hard to say but I believe males were a prevailing number, but not very much. In my team, there were more females – 10 out of 15. In regions, marzes, the number of males prevailed, because families do not encourage females' participation in

such activities. If there are participants from marzes, it means they have studied in Yerevan or lived outside for some time.

- **Which PR tactics had you planned to implement to create a healthy communication with the citizens of the RA?**

We carried out our campaign in two stages. First, we needed to familiarize people with “Yelq”. You know that our leaders are well-known, especially Edmon Marukyan and Nikol Pashinyan. But in the first stage they weren’t associated with Yelq, because Yelq was a newly-established alliance and we had a problem there for the first two weeks. Our tactics was to introduce Yelq to people and inform who established it. Secondly, we needed to wake people during the first two weeks and to change the political discourse. People addressed deputies with everyday problems, concerning cleanness of house entrances, unrepaired roofs, asphalt laying, etc. We needed to take them to a more political logic and switch the logic that the campaign is between candidates to the logic that it is between forces. I believe that during these two weeks we succeeded in this. We covered 3 different regions: Nikol covered Yerevan, Marukyan covered the north and Aram Sargsyan covered the south and each conducted campaign in this logic. In the second stage the leaders united and did campaign across Armenia.

- **How useful was the use of Social Network such as Facebook?**

I think it helped to some extent. In Yerevan, it actually helped. In marzes the situation is a little different. It definitely helped more among youth and less among old people, since they don’t use Facebook that much. When we started the campaign, Yelq’s Facebook likes was 2000, and in the end it reached 7000. Our audience grew by 3.5 times. We also used our parties’ and our own Facebook pages. Here we faced problems, since some candidates opened signed up only 2 months before the campaign and had small number of supporters. Nikol Pashinyan’s was particularly active on Facebook with 50 000 likes and followers, which really helped. His live views sometimes reached 200 000. Since we had financial issues related to posting materials in medias, Facebook helped us a lot.

- **What public gatherings did you have?**

[the interviewee did not mention any public gatherings]

- **Did you consider gender in developing your PR strategy?**

We tried to balance gender presence, especially in social media. Mane Tandilyan and Lena Nazaryan were especially active. Both were elected deputies. Mane was very active, since she had been known from “Dem em” (I’m against) movement. Her participation in media projects was positive in that sense. Lena’s and Mane’s participation was about 20-25 percent: this means that 75 were males.

- **What were the strategies to attract votes from 18-35, 35-55 and 55-above aged voters?**

At first we did not differentiate. Our strategy in the first stage was to wake in people hope and belief in themselves. In the second stage we addressed the youth, since our team members are also young. Our message was meant for people aged 18-40. We focused on the fact that this is a young team with members active in civil society and success in different initiatives. In the second stage we worked on young part of population since we got information that over 60 percent of young people did not intend to participate in elections. This concerned us since they were our main electorate. I believe that we succeeded in waking young people and make them go to elections. Their activity as volunteers indicated that they believed in us, noticed our team and want to support us. In this sense, I think people aged 18-45 voted for us. Some people who voted for Yelq, voted for individual people. For example, almost half of my voters gave their voted to me in particular and helped Yelq get more voted.

- **Did you differentiate between campaigns in the regions and Yerevan?**

250 000 booklets were disseminated across Armenia.

- **How did you prioritize where to campaign more and where not as much?**

It's hard to say, since we did it throughout Armenia. It was obvious that we would gain many votes in Yerevan but we did not focus on Yerevan, since there were many candidates in Yerevan and they were going to do also individual work. We equally distributed leaders' forces across Armenia. During the first 14 days, Nickol covered Yerevan, Edmon the north and Aram the south, later they joined and covered the whole Armenia.

- **How do you explain the huge gap between Yerevan and regions votes?**

In marzes (regions) there were fewer candidates and had less resources than in Yerevan. It's easier to do campaign in Yerevan. For example, in the marz of Gegharkunik, it takes you have to cover 20-30-kilometers to move from one village to another, whereas here it's maximum 10 kilometers from one end to the other and it's also densely populated. Social media is also more accessible in Yerevan. The fact that there were more banners in Yerevan was explained by the fact that candidates paid individually for their banners. Yelq paid for general banners and we distributed banners regions equally across marzes.

- **Did you meet the prior set goals?**

Many factors prevented us from meeting our goals in terms of number. Election bribes were one of the major ones. We lacked financial resources. If we had funds and did more ads on TV, we would have had better results.

- **What was innovative in your campaign?**

The innovative part was that we avoided traditional marches and meetings and focused on personal communication with people, door-to-door, block-to-block.

- **How do you plan to institutionalize your party?**

The concept of institutionalized opposition is one of the focal points in the activity of “Civil Contract”, because we say that if you don’t have an institutionalized opposition, you cannot beat the governing authority. The governing authority and Republican Party are an institution. They have a team, structure and financial resources. We have a good team but an incomplete structure – we are well represented in Yerevan but not in regions. We also have problems with developing a program and involving specialists. We need to solve these problems. The third is attracting funds. When establishing the alliance, we said that we were going to join the 3 forces and become one party. This will help in terms of institutionalization.

- **How did you do fundraising?**

We have done fundraising. Our parties – “Bright Armenia” and “Civil Contract” are receiving main funds from private donations. Last year we did 3 fundraisings and raised a total of 15 million drams. “Bright Armenia” did 6 fundraisings. In March, we did a joined fundraising and, if I’m not mistaken, collected 15 million drams. As far as I remember, “Bright Armenia’s” each fundraising composed 1-1.5 million drams, which means we are talking about 10-12 million.

- **How future do you see for Yelq?**

Currently we participate in Yerevan elections. We believe Yerevan elections to be important in terms of institutionalization, because we want there to be a good team in Yerevan council. This will help form a new team, young leaders will have space to implement their projects, will engage in self-realization and will act from stronger positions before next elections. Now we are pursuing these goals. In Yerevan elections Nickol tops the list. We divided the list in 3 parties. I am number 2, second comes David Khazhatyan from “Bright Armenia”. We are preparing for these elections. We tried to lay more emphasis on TV representation. We’ll also try to have more banners in Yerevan. Visual presentation helps a lot during elections. We will certainly keep the door-to-door approach.

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